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## 1995 Forces

Larraine Stroman

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# CREATIVE FORCES

STIRRINGS DEEP HAUNT OUR SOULS,  
-----  
BREAKING FREE TOWARD VAGUE GOALS,  
-----  
MOVING BEINGS THROUGH WHISPER OR WAIL,  
-----  
PIROUETTE, STROKE, SONG, OR HAIL,  
-----  
GRACING STAGE, CANVAS, OR PAGE  
-----  
WITH WISPS OF AIR OR RAVAGES OF RAGE.  
-----  
IMAGES HUED, ROLES PLAYED,  
-----  
TELLING OUR TALES, OUR SECRETS UNVEILED.

Carolee Bertuzzi



# FORCES

*In Memory of Randy Scarborough*

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# *For Emily, In Gratitude*

Randy Scarborough

#101

*My mornings are full - I lunch, then write:  
To let my child run out and play,  
Parole my demon, clean its cage.  
I call them home by supper, of course;  
But, oh - the afternoons.*

#102

*Oh, I do love life!  
(But nobody cares for love poems any more.)  
So this little waif, unbidden child,  
Will hide in my diary, safe, 'til better times,  
Then grow up.*

#103

*What! Not write tonight? (I am tired.)  
No scratching pen on borrowed paper,  
Scrawling out the words in which I live my life?  
But I must - Tomorrow is not writ yet.*

#104

*I am two selves,  
The one, blood, (my hands ache);  
The other is dissolved  
In a scribbled line of ink, find me.*



# Writer's Block

## and it's not my fault this time

Robin Armstrong

My computer doesn't want me to be a successful writer. It taunts me with its "technology." It sits in judgment, teasing me with its white screen, flashing cursor, and screen-saving programs. I want my beautifully simple typewriter back. I remember my typewriter with great fondness. It never criticized, teased, or tormented me. It just sat, patient and welcoming, like an electronic grandmother. Sure, sometimes we wouldn't get on that well, but that's to be expected in any long-term relationship. My typewriter understood my simple needs and fulfilled them with a willingness that certain machines (I won't name names) refuse to accept.

Getting started used to be so easy; all one needed was a blank piece of paper and the lovely typewriter turned on. Is it so difficult to be turned on? A simple flip of one switch used to do the trick nicely, but noooooo. Now we have to have a power strip with seventeen thousand plugs stuffed into it. We are challenged to risk certain electrocution by daring to reach our trembling hands into the murky depths of technology and trip the toggle to the "on" position.

OK, the power strip is on. You would think you'd be able to start writing now, wouldn't you? With most humble machines, turning on the power source usually suffices, now, doesn't it? Well, not for our circuit snob. After braving the power strip, next you have to figure out how to turn on the hard drive, the screen, and the printer. Now, if any of those words cause flashes of warm fuzzies, then you might be reading the wrong paper. If, however, you either

- A. furrowed your brow in confusion at those wretched words, or
- B. have suddenly remembered the series of foul names and epithets you have for those particular devices,

then, by all means, read on, MacDuff.

The hard drive is the big box that controls the computer. If you're as completely computer stupid as I am, you believe the screen, the part that looks like a TV, controls the computer. Oh, no, my friend. The screen is nothing more than a display unit, something to stare back at you, continually reminding you that you're a computer failure. The hard drive is that deceptively simple-looking box with only one or two buttons on it. Do not be taken in by its rectangular design and quiet humming, for it is the true demon of the night: a modernized soul sucker trying to drag you down into the depths of computer literacy hell, where all your friends have vanished into "The Net," one by one.

Remembering my warning, you reach over and push that oh-so-innocent-looking button, turning on the hard-drive devil. Your next step is to turn on the screen. If you look at the bottom right hand corner of your monitor (that's fancy computer talk for the TV-looking screen), there on the underside of the monitor should be a switch. Don't worry. This one is almost nice compared to you-know-who over there. After the screen flickers to life, your nightmare will begin. You cannot simply start typing now. No, you have to go to the right screen, then the correct program, then you have to start a new project. This list of "user friendly" steps goes on and on.

Finally, the nightmare of technology leads you to the point where I am currently sitting: in front of a blank computer screen, cursor blinking

expectantly, thinking back fondly to the good old days of my IBM electric, and putting off starting this paper for as long as possible. It's all the computer's fault. If this was a simple typewriter, this paper would be done. But I do remember turning on that typewriter, putting in a crisp piece of paper and staring at it for hours on end, waiting for divine inspiration. Well, maybe the computer isn't so bad after all. At least here I can sneak over to the games section and play solitaire until something to write about comes to me. (My typewriter didn't have a solitaire program.) Come to think of it, a quick game of solitaire might be just the thing right now, and I promise I'll play one game and one game only.

Interview with **Kathy Hopkins**, AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR.

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU UNCOVER STUDENTS' INTERESTS?

*"I THINK IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO BE A GOOD LISTENER. IF A STUDENT INDICATES AN INTEREST IN ART .... I TRY TO EXPLORE WHAT THE STUDENT HOPES TO DO WITH IT. I AM AN ADVOCATE OF, 'IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN SOMETHING, TAKE A CLASS IN IT AND EXPLORE THAT INTEREST.' YOUR DREAM ... CAN BE ... DIFFERENT THAN THE REALITY OF ... CAREERS. ALWAYS PURSUE YOUR INTERESTS. IF YOU PURSUE SOMETHING YOU REALLY LOVE ... THEN [YOU] CAN MAKE A LIVING FROM IT AS WELL."*

# My Name

Andrie Owings

**M**y name is a boy's name. Andrie, like Andrew, which means manly. Momma says they misspelled it on my birth certificate. It is supposed to be Andrea. I will go through life as a boy. With all my brothers, maybe it's best. Everyone in my family calls me a different name.

My real dad calls me Angie. When I was born he stole me from the hospital. He said he didn't have the money to pay the bill, so he just slipped me out the back stairs. I think Momma forgot to tell him what she named me. It makes me mad when he calls me Angie, but he's not around much.

My brothers call me two different names: Andie just for everyday and Coon for when they are mad at me. Jeff says I'm noisy like a raccoon and stick my nose into everybody's business. I fight with them when they call me Coon.

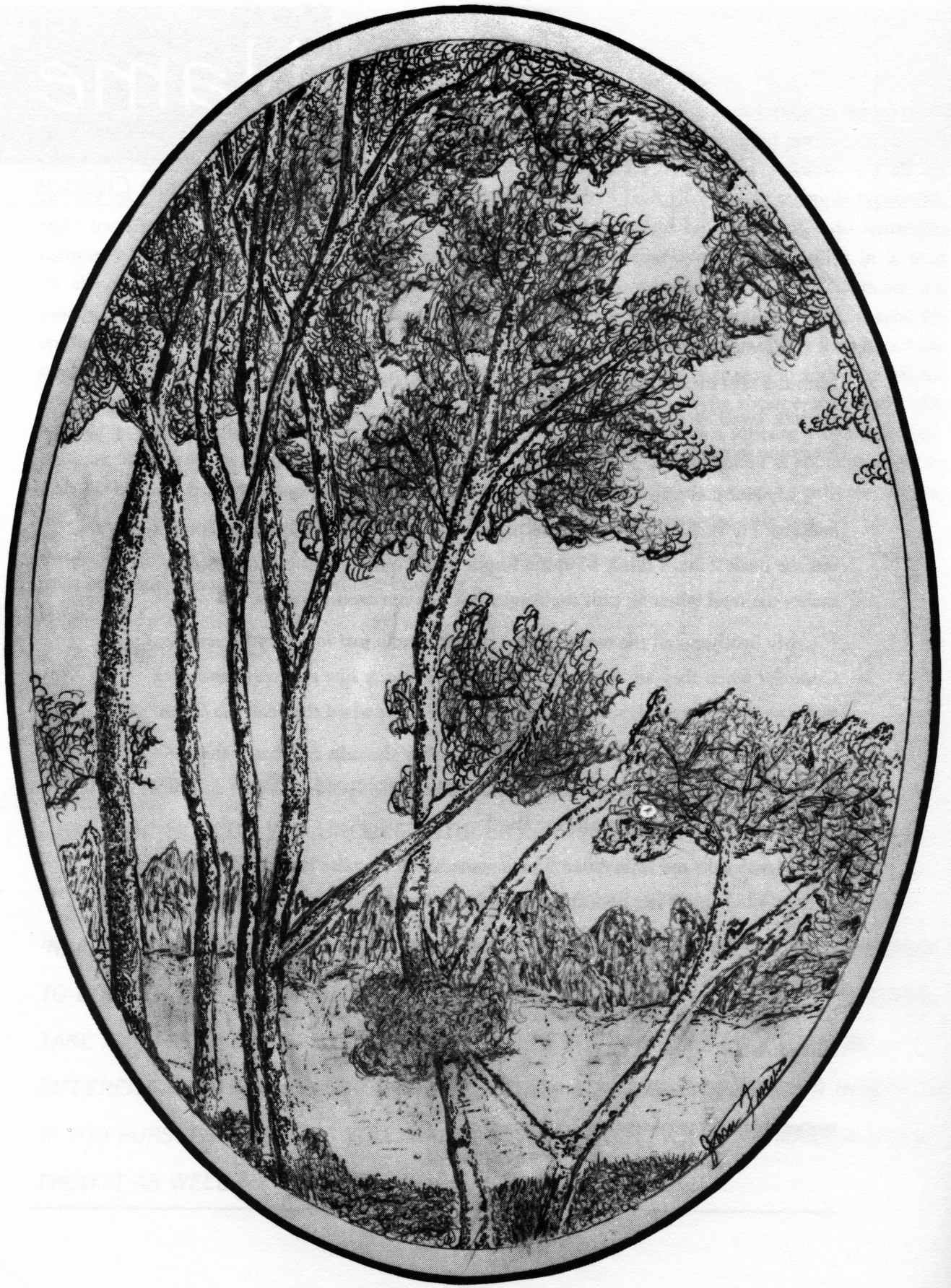
Aunt Cora calls me Pandi. I don't know why she calls me that. I think there are so many kids she can't remember all our names. She is sweet and nice to me. I don't mind if she calls me Pandi.

Memo calls me Miss Aster. That's some movie star she knows. She says I act just like her. It's her own special name just for me.

I would like to have a new name. A girl's name. One like Angelica or Kimberly. Something that sounds soft as it rolls off your tongue. Bonnie, Camille, or Gwen would be nice. Not Andie. Nobody has ever heard of a girl named Andie.

Andrie, Andrea, Andie, Angie, Coon, and Pandi. I guess I am all those names to all those people.





Trees by Jason Francis

# *Ebb and Flow*

Nancy L. Hedrich

The invitation lay in her pocket like a hot poker, burning a hole through the calico in a direct line to her thumping heart. She had been asked to come to the big house! She had been there once before with her mother when Mrs. Biermiester had taken sick. Her ma had insisted on bringing some of her special soup. It was the biggest house Crystal Lee had ever seen up till then, painted white with green shutters and trim to match. They had the luxury of a yard with trimmed grass surrounded by beds of planted flowers. Crystal Lee had asked her Ma how come the porch was on top of the columns instead of on the ground. "So they can sit outside and catch a cool breeze without the mosquitos bothering them. Mosquitos can't fly that high," explained her Ma. They had knocked, lifting the brass knob three times. Their soup had been accepted by the black woman who opened the green door, and they had left. Now she was to go there alone, by invitation! Her heart thumped faster as her hand slid into her pocket, touching the heavy vellum. It was real, alright. She wondered if anyone else had been invited.

It was Crystal Lee's job to empty the pan of dishwater every morning and every evening. It was one of her earliest memories; flower water she had called it. Stamens covered with sticky yellow, wearing their best blue petticoats, waited patiently in the morning breeze for their beau to buzz them. The crystalline droplets settled on their blue perches, winking back at her like precious tears.

"Do they wonder if they will bloom next year?" she thought, gazing at the flowers but seeing something else. Someone else, with hanks of brown wavy hair her fingers itched to brush back from a handsome forehead and soft hazel eyes that smiled back at her. Would he be home during the "tea"?

Certain that she needed to stop thinking about him but knowing she couldn't, she went back inside the house where she had lived her whole life. Putting the dishpan back in the sink, she saw Ma had filled the jelly jar pan with water up to the marker and placed it on the stove to heat. Ma's eyes matched the worn chambray blouse she wore, a softly wrinkled blue faded with river washings. Those eyes saw all things and dispensed understanding like the generous spoon she used to stir the blackberry jelly, swirls of luscious fruit bubbling their aroma through the small house. Crystal Lee's nostrils breathed in the delicate scent mixed with the fresh baked bread cooling on the sideboard. She had just eaten, but her mouth was already beginning to water in anticipation of the treat ahead.

Pa rose from the scarred table he had made with his father before he left home with his bride. "Thankee for the best bowl of porridge I ever did have,"



said Pa while nuzzling Ma's neck. The telltale pink started rising from below her ears to cover her neck and face. He delighted in her reaction and never missed a morning. Neither did Crystal Lee. "Looks like it'll be a sunny day today, so's I'll take my pail with me. I want to get as much work done as I can," said Pa. With a last affectionate hug and pat, he was gone through the door, a two-legged creature advancing on acres and acres of wheat ripening in the sun.

"Ma, tell me again 'bout how Pa brought you the flower seeds," pleaded Crystal Lee. Smoothing the dishtowel across her hands, Ma sank down onto the nearby stool and traced the memory of that day. "One day your Pa came back from town. He walked in all hot and dusty with a kind of funny grin on his face, so I known somethin' was afoot. 'Flo,' your Pa said, not Florence like he usually calls me, 'I saw something today that I ached to buy.' Playing along, I put my hands on my hip and said, 'Eb, what in tarnation did you go and do that for? We don't need to be spending our money on everything that catches your eye's fancy.' He reached into his overall pocket and held his hand out to me. 'Here, it's for you,' he grinned. I took the white, folded envelope and looked inside. I saw a bunch of little bitty seeds. Your Pa said, 'I saw a picture of cornflowers in the seed catalog. Almost the prettiest blue I ever did see. Almost as pretty as your blue eyes. I'm sorry Flo, but I just had to have 'em.' Well, Crystal Lee, my eyes started watering up and your pa gathered me in his arms and held me for a real long, long time," sighed Ma, remembering. Crystal Lee smiled. She knew the story by heart but never grew tired of asking to hear it again.

"How do I look, Ma?" asked Crystal Lee as she smoothed back her freshly washed hair, soft from rainwater and chamomile, pinned up now that she was "of age."

"You'll do," replied Florence, eyeing her daughter. "You're fine enough for anyone - remember that."

Walking to the river, Crystal Lee used her paddle to shove off from the bank, letting the current easily pull the canoe and its passenger downstream. She hadn't felt like harnessing the horse to the buggy; besides, it was a nice day to float downstream. She had read about a gas-powered buggy - now that would be something to see! The pungent air vibrated with the buzz of cicadas and dragonfly wings dancing their iridescent lives away across the surface of the water. Green reflections of thick live oaks arching across the river drifted across Crystal's face, leaving it dappled with light and shadow. The Brazos river was like mother's milk to this parched land, wet nourishment flowing from generous channels of Texas clay and slate.

Moistening her lips, Crystal Lee clamped them together to dispel her nervousness. Underneath the deceptive calm lay a restless spirit. Thinking back, she hadn't seen *him* in years until - the dance last Sunday night.

"Priscilla, who is that?" she had asked, her breath catching on her teeth.

"Who do you mean?" teased Priscilla, knowing precisely who she meant.

"You know, Pris, over there, leaning against the dance post. Who is he?" asked Crystal Lee, yanking hard on her best friend's sleeve.

"That's young Clay Biermeister; he just graduated and is home now," laughed Priscilla in a knowledgeable way, passing on information she had overheard at the general store just yesterday.

Clay caught the girls' look and smiled back. Crystal ducked her head, thinking, "He's taller than me, but not too tall. And he has a nice smile, but not too wide. And his hair, wavy brown heaps of it." He had asked her to



dance, more than once! She had hummed the songs all the way home, mindless of Ma and Pa's amused glances.

Crystal Lee's hand trailed along the water. "This river never worries where it's going or why," she thought to herself. "It has direction and purpose even while it crisscrosses the countryside, flowing over and around obstacles. Why, people might never have survived here if not for the river. She had heard Ma tell the story so many times she felt that she'd lived through the great drought of '89 when it all but killed everything living. Even the great Brazos had felt it, running its lowest in a century, according to Old Man in town. But it never dried up, not the Brazos, unlike the wells and stockponds that so many others depended on. Times were hard that year. Crops failed, not only for lack of water, but burned to a crisp in the heat. The Texas sun had glared upon them like a woman scorned.

Animals had suffered. They still talked about the cows' incessant noise that summer, mooing day and night. Their plaintive cries could be heard across the county. Mr. Tillman had three cows that went stark crazy, stampeding towards their old waterhole, only to find it dried up. After running themselves into a frenzy, they just dropped dead. People still talked about it. A lot of livestock was lost that year. Some were slaughtered, driving the prices way down, so farmers lost money whether their cows lived or died.

People suffered too. Ebenezer had run up to the house - straight through the door to Florence.

"There's trouble o're the Tillman's. I'm going to hitch up the team, be ready to go," he gasped. Florence had quickly packed her carpet valise with linen strips, herbs and ointment, and a jar of fresh soup. Over the sound of the horses at a dead run and the jouncing of the buggy, Ebenezer

explained, "Ted Cooper was working in his field next to Tillman's. He heard screaming and saw Mrs. Tillman running out of the house, off across the fields. Cooper went looking for Asa Tillman and then fetched me for help. As soon as there's enough of us, we'll go lookin'."

Arriving in a whirl of dust, Ebenezer jumped down, turning to help Florence climb out over the buggy wheel. Seeing several men gathered, he headed to the barn to join them. Concern etched their faces. Florence gathered her skirts and entered the unpainted wooden cabin. Blinking quickly to adjust her eyes from the white hot glare, she set her valise on the table and unpacked.

Ebenezer and Asa teamed up, leaving Cooper and two others to fan out across the fields. The wind carried the name of Alice over the earth, but no reply came back. They followed the crumpled wheat path to the edge of the forest. With a shared look, the men pressed on, looking for broken twigs, pieces of torn cotton, or overturned rocks. On and on they searched, till Asa, stumbling through the thick brush, almost fell head first into the river. Grabbing handfuls of roots and limbs, he saved himself. The corner of his eye caught a flash of color in the distance.

Carefully picking his way, Asa waded over to his wife. Alice was sitting smack in the middle of the Brazos, letting its cool water flow around her and over her hands and legs.

"Alice, I'm taking you home now." Splashing out of the river, the men made their way home with an unprotesting Alice lying quietly in her husband's arms.

Placing her in Florence's capable hands, the men headed outside to scuff their toes in the dust and feel helpless once again. Florence spooned broth into Alice's mouth and changed the cool cloths on her head when they warmed. Everyday that week and several after, Ebenezer

and Asa hauled water from the river. Gallons and gallons they brought back to keep the animals watered and Alice cool. It was a hard year for the Tillman's.

Like everything else that year, the flowers suffered too. Ebenezer returned from his daily morning walk across acres of parched fields and found Florence in bed. Alarmed, Eb sat on the bed, the springs crunching under his weight. "Flo, honey" he asked, "are you feeling poorly?" Hearing only sobs, he gathered her into his arms. "What's troubling you? Tell me please," begged Ebenezer.

"Oh Eb, those, those flowers look like the first cake I ever baked for you, burned to a crisp," stuttered a grieving Florence. "They're gone and dead and they were so pretty," she cried, clutching shriveled stems between her fingers. "Why does everything have to die? Why do we have to live in a place that kills every living thing in sight? Why Eb, why?" she hiccupped and sobbed.

Holding his wife close, Eb had waited for the storm to end and the shaking to stop. Pulling out his bandana hankie, Eb wiped her face. Florence leaned into her husband's arms, letting his strength seep into her inner being. "Here, Eb, let me have that hankie," Florence instructed and proceeded to blow her nose. "Well, that's as much water as I've seen all month," she laughed weakly.

"Flo, life's like the Brazos. It comes and goes, sometimes it's full and sometimes not, but it always remains the river," Eb had whispered into her ear. "We'll see it through together," he said, giving her a squeeze.

The flowers had shriveled up, looking like pieces of brown leather strips someone had carelessly thrown away. The spring of '91 was a wet one and brought many surprises with it: one was the cornflowers that sprang up by the porch like always. Eb declared, "Cornflowers are

hereby a Texas native. Anything that can survive a drought out here deserves to wear the brand of Texas native, whether they be man, beast, or plant."

Laughing back at her husband, Florence declared, "Well, I guess that makes us Texas natives too." Rubbing her back, she had wondered if that was a good time to tell Eb what else the spring rains had brought. Crystal Lee arrived later that year with the golden maples and was named after the clear water that was so essential to their lives.

The canoe glided down the river, neither too fast nor too slow. The Biermeister boat dock was almost in sight. Instead of worrying about the future, her mind was flooded with memories from the past. The flowers, the river, Ma and Pa crowded around: "Remember," they seemed to whisper.

"Does knowing where you've been help tell you where you're going?" she wondered. Ma and Pa knew as newlyweds where they were going to start a family and homestead a piece of land. The flowers knew to bloom every spring, all the knowledge of life contained in their little bitty seed from the year before. Even this river knew where it had been and where it was going.

Crystal Lee dipped her oar into the water, guiding the canoe over to the boat dock. Slipping the knot over the end of the bois d'arc post, she clambered out. Standing tall to stretch her lithe frame, she stood still for a minute, listening—to see if she could hear it. Yes, there it was, there on the cool breeze stirring her skirts and in the gurgle of the water. Life. It was behind her and all around.

She patted her pocket and started walking up the path that would take her to the big house. She knew where she came from and with a clear mind went forward to meet whatever lay ahead.





The Shape of Life by Jamie M. Ramsey





Donna Mooney  
photographed by Daniel Didawick

# The Debate

William A. Graham

---

LISTEN, MY FRIEND, I WANT YA TO KNOW  
WHY THAT GUN OF YOURS HAS GOTTA GO.  
TOO MANY COWBOYS WHO WERE SLOW TO SHOOT  
ARE LYING ON THAT HILL THAT WE CALL BOOT.

TOO MANY KIDS WERE JUST HAVIN' FUN  
HEADS BLOWN OFF, ANOTHER ACCIDENT WITH A GUN.  
TOO MANY SPOUSES HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH LEAD  
THEY WERE JUST ANGRY, NOW THEY'RE JUST DEAD.

SO YA SEE, MY FRIEND, AND NOW YA KNOW  
WHY THAT GUN OF YOURS HAS GOTTA GO.

IN REPLY, BILL JOE BOB IS A FRIEND OF MINE;  
NOW HE'S IN THE HOSPITAL, ANOTHER VICTIM OF CRIME.  
JUST TODAY BILLY WAS WALKIN' THE CITY STREETS,  
'LONG COMES A CITY PUNK, HIS COLD STEEL POOR BILLY MEETS.

IF ONLY BILL JOE BOB HAD BEEN ARMED FOR PROTECTION  
THERE'D BE ONE LESS CRIMINAL IN NEED OF DETECTION.  
WE CAN'T LET THE CRIMINALS BE THE ONLY ONES  
TO BE LEFT HOLDIN' THEIR SMOKIN' SIX-GUNS.

SO YA SEE, MY FRIEND, AND NOW YA KNOW  
WHY THAT GUN OF MINE CAN NEVER GO.



# Mamma

James C.

# Never

Dorrell

# Lied

The wind bucked through the trees, casting small branches to the ground.

Mexican oaks and buckeye trees bent before the wild wind. A scruffily dressed farmer leaned into it and navigated his way from his barn to his house. Pushing the door open with a firm grip on the knob, so as not to lose the door, he entered the kitchen. His brother sat at the small table, sharpening his

knife against an oil stone. Yellowed newsprint kept the oil off the pecan table. Bill looked up at his older brother for a moment, then said, "Bob, finish sharpening these kitchen knives for me. You know I'm afraid of knives. It's like Mama said, ever since I was a little boy and swallowed a magnet in the kitchen department at the hardware store..."

"Shut up, Bill, you're just using that for an excuse to do nothing around this farm."

Bob stood against the door for a moment as if he hadn't quite finished some plan, and then he said to his brother, "He's getting mean, Bill. I guess we're gonna have to kill him."

"He wouldn't be getting mean if you'd have listened to me, Bob. Besides, what about the money we've been collecting? You know nobody is gonna want to come around and look at a dead pig, even if it is a giant."

"Well, maybe we can stuff it and sell it to the fair grounds or the city museum."

"I dunno, I think we'd have to give it to them. They ain't gonna want to buy nothing like Meleager, even though he's worth over \$100. Besides, it'll cost a fortune for us to have it stuffed."

"Well, maybe we can kill it and just leave it out in the field and let the ants pick its bones clean. Then at the end of summer, after the sun has bleached the bones, we can round them up and stick 'em back together."



"That might not be such a bad idea, Bob."

The two brothers stopped talking for a moment. Bill wiped the oil off the sharpened knives. He wrapped the oil stone up in the yellowed newsprint. His brother fidgeted with his overall buttons, then said, "I tell you, Bill, we've got to do something with him. He's tearing up stuff. We can't keep him tied up on the back side of the barn. You know it's making him mighty mad being hitched like that."

"I know it is, Bob, but what else can we do with him? You know if we let him go off the rope, he'll end up in some other county again."

Bob looked out the window at the sumac bushes shaking in front of the fence. "Do you really think the wind is blowing that hard?"

"Heck, Bob, the last time he got away it wasn't blowing half this hard, and you know it."

"Well, he wasn't as big then as he is now. Damn it, Bill, you're just making me mad. We wouldn't have had all the trouble we've had with that pig lately if you'd of done like I said and left it tied up in the first place."

"I was just gonna take it back to its pen."

"No you wasn't, you wanted to play with it. You should have been helping me bale hay."

"You know I'm afraid to get around that hay baler, ever since I was a little kid, like Mama said, when I fell asleep in the field during harvest time."

"Bill, it's just another one of your excuses to do nothing around here. I don't believe a word Mama ever said. Now we gonna have to do something about that pig. Ever since it blew into Mrs. Vetch's barnyard, it's had a strange look in its eye."

"Maybe it hit its head."

"No, Bill, it's got the look of a wild animal that just figured out that it's in a cage. You

know no pig should ever figure out that they're in a pen, waiting for a barbeque."

"Bob, you're just gonna have to kill it before it gets any bigger."

"Whoa, what do ya mean, I'm gonna have to kill it. I'm already doing everything else around here. Where were you when I had to put up the electric fence around his pen after he got seven feet tall?"

"You know where I was. I was in bed with the fever I got when you hit me in the head with that shovel."

"Hey, that was two weeks after I hit you that you come down with that mystery fever."

"Well geeze, Bob, it was an electric fence and electricity in it, and you know how afraid I get around electricity."

"Ever since you were a little boy, Bill, and I still don't know why. Never seen a grown man afraid to plug something in or going around using a wooden spoon to turn the light switch on or off."

"It ain't my fault, you know. You remember what Mama said about me getting caught up in that kite string as a little baby during a thunder storm."

"I don't believe it. Never believed a word Mama said. Not after she said we come from the briar patch. Then when I went out there looking for a replacement for you, I got all cut up in the thorns, and she ended up using a whole bottle of iodine on me. Never did find a replacement for you."

"Gee, Bob, you sure don't know how to treat your little brother. You're getting as mean as that ol' pig is."

"Maybe I feel about as tied down as that pig is. Maybe I want to fly away, just like it wants to." Bob glared at his brother as he

picked up the knives and newsprint on the table. Bill edged towards the door as he eyed the knives in his brother's fist. Bob put them in their drawer then looked his brother in the eye.

"Maybe I ought to just go let it loose and let the wind carry it where it may. I'm tired of dealing with all the problems around this place, and I'm tired of dealing with you. I'm gonna let that pig go."

With a clenched hand on the top of his hat, Bob turned on the worn heels of his boots and stomped past his brother through the kitchen door and off towards the barn. Bill dogged behind him, yapping at his heels about why they ought to kill the pig, then sell the bones to the museum. Bob tried to ignore him. As he rounded the corner of the barn, Bob abruptly stopped. Even though he had seen this pig every day of its life, the size of it still amazed him. It seemed to be growing faster and faster.

Although it couldn't move around much because of the ropes that secured its bathtub-sized hooves to two tractors and a truck, the pig had pulled the ropes tight and was busily scratching its back on the corner of the barn roof. A dozen dislodged shingles were scattered beneath it.

"Now dang it, there's something else that's gonna need some fixin', and I ain't gonna do it this time."

"Bob, don't let the pig go."

"It's too late, Bill, I'm letting it go, and you're fixing the roof."

"But, Bob, you know I'm afraid of heights. Ever since I was a little kid. You remember what Mama said. I had followed her out into the cotton field when she was choppin' cotton. She set me in the basket of cotton, and a vulture thought I was a baby lamb and swooped down and..."



Corpus Christi Birds by Julie Barbeau



"Bill, I don't believe it. Now get out of my way." Bob pushed his brother aside and slowly approached the giant pig.

"Meleager, it's me, Bob!" he yelled to the pig. It stopped scraping against the barn and eyed him with angry red eyes. Milk white spittle frothed like a barber's shaving cup between its yellow teeth. Its neck was like iron, its bristles like spears. It snorted and dug the ground with its black hoof.

"I ain't gonna hurt you," Bob said a little nervously. "Now you hold still while I loosen these ropes."

Bill started to speak but, deciding against it, silently watched his brother release the hog.

When the ropes dropped away from its tree trunk ankles, the pig backed away from the two brothers. It looked at them, then it looked at the puffy clouds that whisked across the sky. Turning, it trotted around the barn to the windy side.

The wind blew into the pig's face, smoothing its ears along the sides of its head. The pig stuck his head into the air. The wind blew into the caves of its snout and he grunted with pleasure. He turned and looked at Bob and Bill, who had come around from the back of the barn. Then the pig began to run into the

wind, not too fast at first, as if running were something new. But as he made his way through the front gate and started down the long drive to the highway, he ran faster and faster. The mountains of muscle and fat rippled across his frame with every thunderous downstroke of polished pig feet, his pink flesh becoming redder and redder as the gallons of blood circulated under its skin. Now the pig was running faster than the brothers' Ford truck had ever driven down their drive. Just before the drive ended at the highway, the pig leaped into the air. The wind lifted it high, then swung it around in the direction of Bill and Bob. They watched in silence as it rose into the sky a hundred feet over their heads, becoming a speck in the sky and then lost in the clouds.

"It could of waved or something," Bill said quietly.

"Oh shut up, Bill, and go cook some dinner."

"You know I can't do that, Bob. I've been too afraid of cooking ever since I was a little kid. You remember what Mama said about me falling asleep in the cook stove when I was a baby."

Bob stopped and looked at his brother. His grip tightened on the coil of rope he held in his hand. "Bill, I don't believe a word Mama said."

Interview with **David Najjab**, PROFESSOR OF APPLIED GRAPHIC DESIGN.

QUESTION: PLEASE DISCUSS THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN ART.

*"IT IS JUST ANOTHER TOOL, JUST ANOTHER MEANS BY WHICH TO PRODUCE ART. THAT'S WHY IN OUR CLASSES WE TEACH DESIGN AND AESTHETICS ALL THE WAY THROUGH, BECAUSE THE COMPUTER IS NOT GOING TO BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR CREATION. ALL IT IS GOING TO BE IS A DIFFERENT MEANS FOR CREATION."*



# Ode

Amy Frishkey

*You sure are pretty.  
How would you like to try living?  
It's fun,  
And I won't even give you any bother about it,  
Since you're so pretty and sweet.  
How about a drink?  
I know it's the rotten fruit,  
But it will help our joining together  
To go a little more smoothly.  
You can gaze at my apple tree  
And know what it's like for me  
To gaze at you.  
You do have tender green eyes,  
By the way...  
They sparkle swimmingly.  
We can skinny dip.  
You can float like a twig,  
And I'll make the waves.*

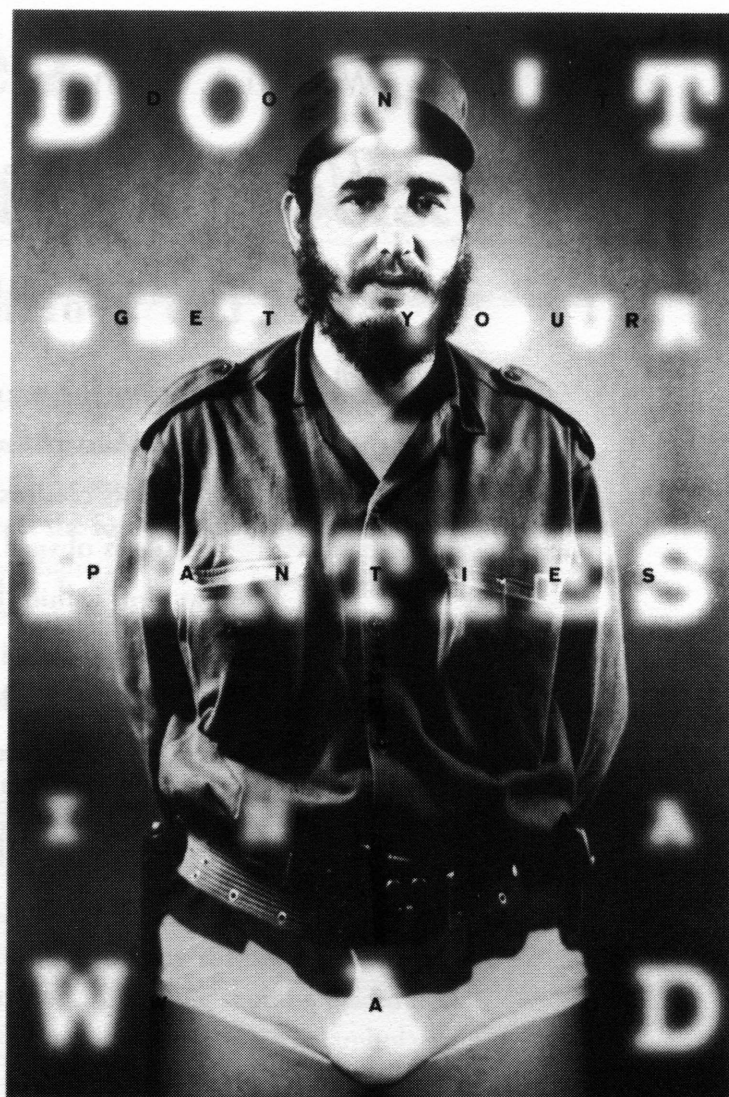
*And stop dwelling on that dying pigeon  
You found on the sidewalk last night.  
You're not the only one into metaphors,  
And I can safely say  
You're not that bird any more.*

**FIDEL CASTRO HAS BEEN THE  
LAST MAJOR BASTION OF COMMUNISM  
IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE  
FOR THE PAST FOUR DECADES.**

**MAYBE ALL HE NEEDS IS A  
CHANGE OF UNDERWEAR.**



**JOCKEY. THE BRAND THAT FITS.**



Randall Addison



William A. Graham

## “Coping with Life”

### “All the World’s a Stage”

When I contemplate the meaning of life,  
The seriousness of the existence of my being,  
I always come to this conclusion:  
Life is absurd.  
Only a play within the theater of my mind.

My character acts and reacts to the other players,  
Kind or abrasive, forgiving or vindictive, villain or hero,  
I am the playwright, the actor, the director, and critic.  
Life can be what I wish it to be.  
It’s up to me.

Interview with **Craig “Yo” Erickson**, THEATRE INSTRUCTOR.

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP A BROAD RANGE OF CREATIVE SKILLS?

*“I THINK ENERGY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CREATIVE FORCE NEEDED. A POOR PERFORMANCE CAN BE COVERED UP IF AN ACTOR HAS ENOUGH ENERGY TO CARRY IT OFF FOR THE AUDIENCE.*

*IT IS CREATIVITY FROM THE GROUND UP. THE ACTOR CAN BE CREATIVE ON A NUMBER OF LEVELS ... [TO MEET THE CHALLENGE] AND MESH WITH THE DIRECTOR’S INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPT.*

*I THINK IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR A STUDENT OR ANYONE IN THE ARTS TO HAVE AN EXPERTISE IN MORE THAN ONE AREA — BECAUSE IT IS SUCH A HARD WAY TO MAKE A LIVING. I LIKE TO EAT ON A REGULAR BASIS, AND THE TECHNICAL END OF THINGS ALLOW ME TO DO THAT.”*



# Who Jumped from the Tracks Today?

---

Matt Thurber

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The pregnant woman lay on the sidewalk, mouth foaming. I had to step long to avoid treading on her. I'd been working in Manhattan for a year and had honed my streetwalk to a fine rhythm. Nothing stopped me on the streets. It took exactly four minutes and 37 seconds to walk the four blocks from the subway station to my office. I never stopped for red lights.

As I stepped over the pregnant woman, she heaved, thrusting her bulging midsection so high I thought she'd break her back. Her thin body didn't look like it could support the life it carried, and her brown face lacked meat, cheekbones jutting out, eyes open but switched off.

She was dying. I don't know how I knew, but life was leaking out of her, bubbling on her lips and splashing into the dirty gutter along with the rest of the city's trash.

A gurgling breath spat out of her mouth, then her body relaxed. She reached her hand towards me, long dirty fingernails trying to grip the cement sidewalk like a spider trying to climb out of a toilet bowl. A choking sound replaced her gasping breathing and her eyes rolled whites up. I debated calling an ambulance. Too late. She was dead, and I was already half a block away, the opening to the subway beckoning, its hot vinegary breath exhaling as a train compressed the air in the station, welcoming me.

I take the Path train from 34th Street to Hoboken, then New Jersey Transit all the way to Netcong. People ask where I live, Netcong, I say, It's a suburb of Saigon. It might as well be, it's in the middle of nowhere at the end of the NJ Transit line. Total commute time, including the walk to the office and the walk home, two hours and 18 minutes.

It costs 75 cents to take the Path train. Today I check carefully for transit cops and jump the turnstile. No one notices, but no one sits near me. I watch the sheep standing where the door's going to open when the train stops. They all gather in expectant clumps, and if the train operator feels like having some fun, he'll stop the train a couple of feet off of normal, and the sheep have to shift over to get in the door. When the train finally screeches to a stop, brakes shrieking, the doors puff open and the sheep burst into the train, fighting for a valuable seat.

Surprise. A lady glares at me when she sees me already sitting in the choice back window seat on the right side. I refuse to join the herd; the herd doesn't like that.

The train operator has to look out the side window to see that everyone is inside the train before he shuts the doors. So he pokes his head out and then pushes the button and the doors close without snagging arms or legs or briefcases. The operator – they all do it – leaves the window open or at least unlatched, and that's how I make my entrance. Instead of waiting with the herd or risking not getting a seat by squeezing in with the rest of them, I wait at the spot where I know the operator's window will stop. I make sure the operator isn't looking, he's usually still inside his cab setting the brakes and I jump through the window and grab a seat, just as the commuters stream in through the open doors.

Sometimes the operators latch the window, not often, so I just jump on the coupling between the trains and enter through the back door.

No one else but me does this.

On the way home, I arrive at Hoboken well before the NJ Transit train is due to leave. This guarantees me an empty two-seat row. I sit next to the aisle and take a nap. The commuters always go for another seat because it's too much of a hassle to climb over me into a window seat and they don't want to wake me up. It's rare that anyone tries to sit next to me, but if they do, I shift over to sit in the window seat. I don't care if they give me dirty looks. I do this every day, five days a week, 50 weeks a year.

My favorite time is the morning ride into Hoboken. At certain times of the year, especially in the fall, the sun rises while I'm napping. And as the train pulls into the station, the golden sunlight makes everything look beautiful, even the trashy train yard. We glide across the marshlands near the turnpike, the grass waves in a light breeze, deeply green in the early light. The corrugated steel buildings in the yard are burnished with highlights of silver and red rust, and the

wooden ties that anchor the tracks glow with earthy brown life.

The problem with arriving in the morning is that the train has 11 cars, and each one carries over 50 commuters. Our train is just one of dozens emptying into the station, sometimes at the same time, and most of the commuters are headed for the Path train. It doesn't matter whether I jump in through the window or not, sometimes in the mornings just getting to the Path train means fighting through hundreds of commuter bodies.

It took me a while to figure out how to beat the herd to the Path station.

Normally, if I get off the train like the rest of the commuters, I first have to wait for them all to get off so I can get off, then walk as fast as possible to keep up with the pack, then try to jockey for position at the Path station. Dealing with all those people adds minutes to my commute, plus it's aggravating. They think I'm one of them.

I notice that the train slows down considerably before entering the station. And it goes right by the entrance to the Path station. The conductor always opens the doors to get ready for the rush before the train stops.

Next day, I make my move. As the train slows and starts braking, I wait for the conductor to open the doors. As soon as I hear the pneumatic swish and the doors retract into the walls, I step onto the bottom step of the doorway. Checking for trains on the other tracks, I jump onto the roadbed and cross the other tracks, carefully balancing my briefcase. I make it to the Path station way ahead of anyone else.

Stupid sheep.

The newspaper said nothing about the dead epileptic pregnant woman. I figured there'd be something in the paper, maybe something about





Marc Wolens

a miracle baby rescued from the still-warm flesh of an epileptic homeless woman who'd died on the street. Well, nobody noticed her when she was alive, maybe nobody noticed her dead, and she just got picked up with the garbage.

Commuting continues to go well. I've saved \$75 so far by jumping the Path turnstiles. I don't bother checking to see if anyone is looking anymore. Nobody cares.

I feel like I live on trains.

No one ever talks to me or to each other. It's like an unwritten rule. I might sit next to the chairman of Chemical Bank one day or a janitor the next day. I'd never know. The only rule seems to be, fold your paper correctly so that you don't invade the space of the person next to you. I find it easiest to read the Daily News, even though it's trash. It's a tabloid format. The New York Times is just too wide, plus it doesn't have comics.

It started to go wrong the day the fellow next to me told me his life story. Not that I wanted to hear it. He didn't fall for my pretending-to-be-asleep ruse on the train and claimed the window seat before I had a chance to pretend to wake up and move over.

"Been riding this train for 47 years," he told me. Red faced and fleshy, he looked like the good life had been extra good to him. "When I first started riding this train, it was coal-powered, and if you didn't close your window when we went through the tunnel, everyone in your car would be black from the soot."

I wondered if he'd still get on the train every day after he retired.

Three days after the pregnant epileptic lady died, I got up as the train approached the yards, diesel chuffing across the swampy grassland, brakes grabbing and releasing, shrieking and silent as the train negotiated the switches that directed it toward its berth in the station. When

the doors breathed open, I was glad that all I could smell was diesel smoke and not steam train soot. I waited for the train to slow down and jumped. A rod slipped away as my foot landed and my ankle twisted with sudden pain. I had to sit down on the filthy roadbed and catch my breath; the train slowed and stopped; bored businessmen stared at me, not surprised, but disapproving. The man who'd ridden the trains for more than half his life smiled at me and winked.

Even limping, I still made it to the Path train waiting area before the rest of the crowd. Getting through the window was not too difficult. My ankle didn't even swell up, and it felt okay by then.

Somebody already had my seat. The people rushing on through the door glared at her, and I stared. How did she get on before me? This station is the end of the line. Unless she made a mistake and is going back again, she beat me onto the train.

I tried to avoid staring at her. She looked familiar, but not like someone I knew, more like *deja vu* familiar. You wake up and realize that all that detailed important stuff that's been happening all night was just a dream. And during the rest of the day, you keep thinking you're forgetting something. I couldn't see her too well, anyway, standing pressed on all sides by sweaty commuter bodies.

At 34th Street, I waited until she stood up. She was pregnant. It was the epileptic lady. Not dead. A high-powered woman in power skirt and tennis shoes elbowed me as I tried to follow the epileptic lady. When I finally elbowed my way onto the crowded platform, she was gone.

I didn't work much that day.

I didn't get to see if she got my seat on the way home because the Path trains stopped running. I could tell something was wrong as I



crossed Broadway. A horde of angry commuters jammed the entrance. I asked someone in front of me what was wrong. He just shook his head. I didn't need to join the sheep to find out that the trains weren't running, so I tried to figure an alternate way of getting to Hoboken. The Port Authority bus terminal would be crowded too – no use trying to catch the NJ Transit bus. I headed for the Lincoln Tunnel. The usual traffic jam fought for the right to advance a few feet at a time, five lanes squeezing into two, every foot a precious commodity. Molecules can't touch each other, but when they get too close too quickly, things happen. Cars are like molecules, except they hit each other more often than molecules do.

Desperately, I jumped in front of a decent-looking car with a white guy at the wheel. I suppose he listened to me because I looked okay, and I didn't try to squeegee his windshield. "The trains are screwed up, and I need to get across the river. Can you give me a lift?"

He was a priest and he gave me a ride all the way to the train station in Hoboken, even though it was out of his way.

What a relief. I beat all the sheep good this time. They're still bleating in Manhattan, thinking that if they jam together tighter and force their way into the station, the trains will magically begin to work. I, meanwhile, climbed onto a very empty NJ Transit train.

She sat in my window seat.

The pregnant lady.

She is black and has epilepsy and should be dead.

And she smells.

I turned around and quickly walked into another car. It was the smoking car. It stunk. I didn't care.

I called in sick next day.

The following day I rode my motorcycle to work. I remembered why I never rode my motorcycle to Manhattan. Besides people trying to run me off the road, I almost died of carbon monoxide poisoning in the tunnel, and I couldn't find cheap parking in the city. None of the parking garages took motorcycles. I finally parked illegally and chained the motorcycle to a lamppost so that the police wouldn't tow it away.

I had to take the train to work.

I saw her again on the Path train, sitting in my choice seat before I could get there. This time, I sat next to her. I stared at her. Skinny, with prominent cheekbones, pockmarked skin, stained teeth. The baby part protruded like a big tumor, like it didn't belong there but was going along for the ride anyway. I finally got the courage to ask her, "What are you doing?"

She smiled and licked a fleck of foam off her thin lips. And winked.

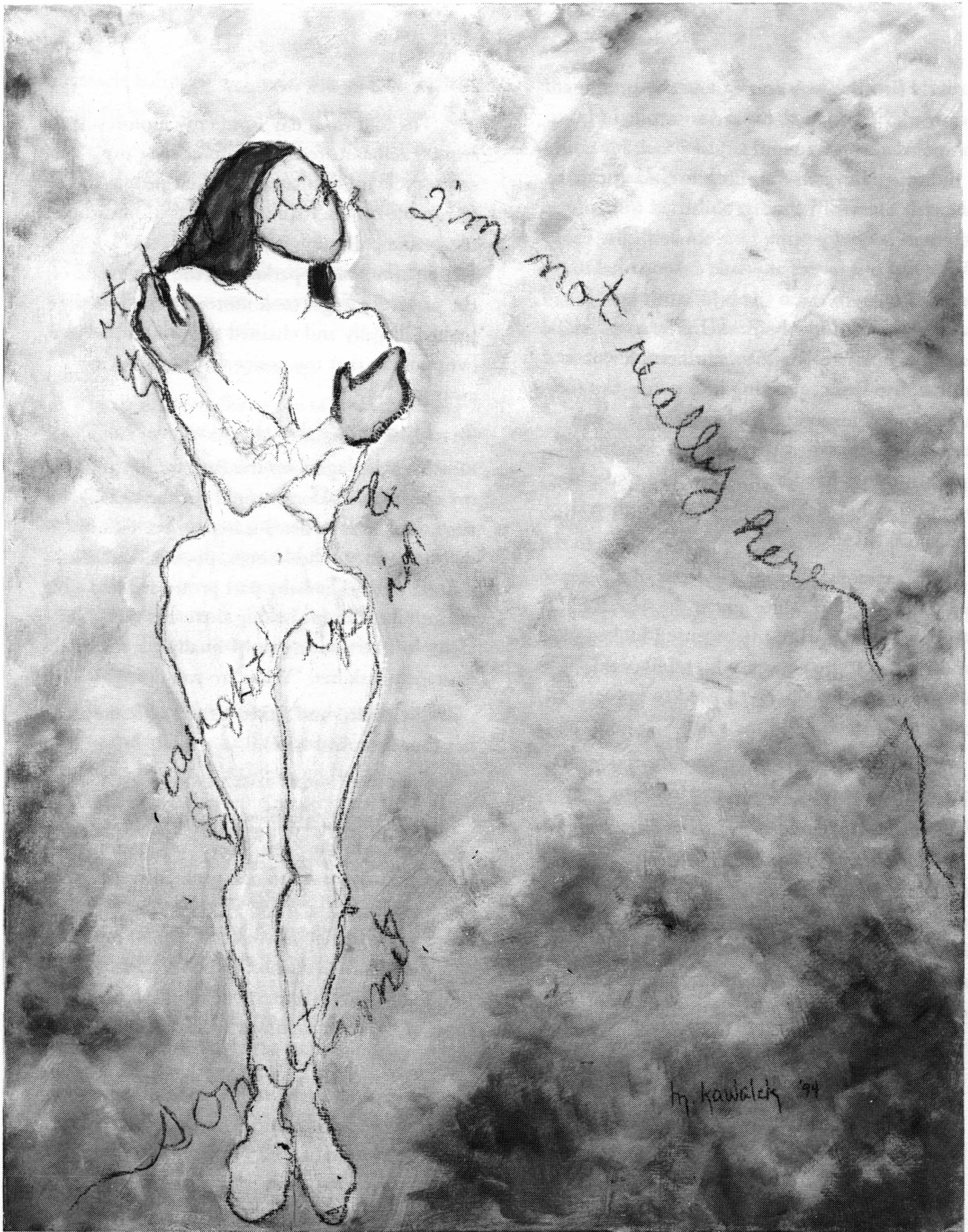
I felt like I didn't exist any more.

New York Daily News, Page 15 –

Commuters in the 34th Street Path station told police that they saw no one push Steve Jones, an editor for Business Travel Weekly, who was killed when he fell in front of the 5:10 pm train. "He didn't have a chance," a police spokesman told the News. "It appears he bounced off the front of the train then was sucked under the wheels."

Emergency crews responded immediately, and Jones was pronounced dead on arrival at Doctor's Hospital at 5:25 pm.

New York Daily News, page 1 – Path trains resume normal services after jumper interrupts rush-hour commute. (See related story, photos on page 15.)



M. Kawalek



# *Phantasy of Perfection*

William A. Graham

*A phantasy of perfection! An illusion! A dream!  
She comes to life in the depth of the night,  
A phantom only, of a woman that is cherished.  
Into the darkness of my soul, she sheds serene light.*

*Eyes sparkling as the sun through a diamond,  
Hair shining of the purest of gold,  
From her heart flows the inner beauty  
That lies within the gentleness of her soul.*

*A smile lighting a face that glows,  
Showing the peace of a woman secure  
In the love of a man whose strength  
Is derived from a woman so truly pure.*

*Illusion! Illusion! How real you do seem!  
If only reality were the same as a dream.*

Interview with **Lee Akins**, POTTERY INSTRUCTOR.

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU STRETCH STUDENTS' CREATIVITY BEYOND THEIR  
TECHNICAL SKILLS?

"FROM AN ART TEACHER'S VIEWPOINT, [SKILL] IS SECONDARY. THE CREATIVE SPIRIT  
OR THE INDIVIDUAL'S EXPRESSION ENDS UP BEING MUCH MORE INTERESTING THAN  
[THE ABILITY] TO BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING WELL.

AS A TEACHER, I FEEL EVERYONE CAN DEVELOP [THEIR CREATIVITY].

IN SOME RESPECTS, THE CREATIVE SPIRIT IS THE HARDEST TO GRASP; THE TECHNICAL  
PART? AS LONG AS YOU ARE WILLING TO STAY WITH IT YOU'LL GRASP IT IN TIME."

# HAIR

Katherine Williams

The comb snags again on the tangles, and she yanks the blue plastic so hard it snaps in two. She looks at the handle still clutched in her fingers, at the tines of the comb sticking out of Ruthie's blonde hair like a severed hand, at Ruthie's face screwed up in tears in the mirror.

"Well, if you hadn't gone swimmin' without your cap this wouldn't of happened. I told you before, Ruthie, your hair's too thin to let it just float around in the chlorine like that." She knows; she's a beautician, and she's seen it all before. Not a hair designer or a scalp technician (whatever that was, anyway), or even a hair stylist, she tells her customers. Just a plain old beautician, like her mother before her. So she knows what she's talking about when she tells her daughter "Next time, you wear a cap or I'll chop it all off; I will"!

She plucks the broken comb out of Ruthie's hair and throws it in the pink plastic trash can in the corner, then digs another comb out of the drawer. Janie knows Ruthie's heard it all before, but it bothers her that her daughter ignores her, watches her in the mirror with her eyes narrowed like a sneaky cat's. She thinks Ruthie doesn't care, only grows her hair long because Janie likes it like that, likes to play with the long blonde strands while we watch "Wheel of Fortune" together. Janie would just love to have long hair herself, but hers never grows longer than her chin before it just breaks off, snaps off like raw spaghetti. She works on Ruthie's tangles with the familiarity of long practice, eases them out with bent fingers smelling of permanent waves and hairspray.

"Off you go, now" she says when the last tangle is gone. "Off you go." She watches her daughter bolt from the windowless bathroom, scrawny jack-hammer legs pumping and pounding, heels never hitting the thin carpet. Janie never could run like that, not now, not ever. She's got feet of marble; that's what her mother always said. Like blocks of cold gray marble, stuck on the bottoms of her legs.

She hears the front door slam, hears Ruthie and the next door neighbor's kids run down the block, their bare feet slapping the pavement like wet hands on a baby's butt. Nope, never could run like that, she thinks, and pulls the tangles from the tines of the comb; opens the drawer and takes out the plastic bag full of years of Ruthie's tangles, matted and multihued like a hand-braided rug. She's saved every one, only God knows why. She keeps telling herself she'll know why someday, but she never tells anyone about the bag, not even Ruthie. Keeps it hidden in the back of the drawer and pulls it out only when she's alone.



Janie leans back against the wall, looks at herself in the mirror. It's been another hard week: three customers canceled last minute, left her sitting around with nothing to do but shoot the breeze with Angie the fingernail lady, and that always depresses her. Angie only works when she wants to. She's pretty and young and has a husband with a good job and no kids, and she grows her perfect nails long and keeps them painted all the time. Janie holds up her hands, eyes them in the mirror. They're rough and red, and the knuckles are swollen like insect galls in the oak tree outside the bedroom window. All those perms are making me ugly, she thinks, can't hardly bend my fingers anymore. She looks again at her face, lined like the silted delta of a personal river. "Damn Angie," she says out loud, "She don't know anything." Her voice bounces back at her out of the mirror and sounds old in her ears, old and tired, and she leaves the close-smelling room in a hurry, not even bothering to turn out the lights.

Janie walks down the hall, steps over Ruthie's Suzy Q, life-sized, battery-operated doll with the eyes that move and the voice that sounds like a drowning cat, heads for the kitchen for a Coke, then stops for some reason and picks up the doll. She never could stand the thing. It reminds her, for some reason, of hot, humid Mondays and stale, hard bread, but it was Ruthie's favorite. Used to be she never went anywhere without Suzy Q. Now Ruthie's got her attention on some glamorized Barbie with a bust that Janie would kill to have and loud clothes that cost too much. Suzy Q spends most of the time under Ruthie's bed, except for once in a while when her daughter drags it out to show her friends how she can make the doll roll its eyes up into its empty head and say "Mama"! in a surprised, underwater sort of way whenever Ruthie swats it on the butt. Suzy Q is always good for a laugh, now and then.

Looking at the doll in her hands, Janie can't help but notice that the poor thing's hair (she laughed when she first saw the box: "Practically the Real Thing"! ) is in tangles again, rubber bands half-pulled out, and isn't that gum embedded next to its pink plastic scalp? She presses her nose down next to the doll's head, sniffs. Yep, Juicy Fruit. Janie frowns, turns around, heads back to the bathroom for the comb.

She squats on the floor, stuffs Suzy Q's head between her knees, and jams the comb she used on Ruthie's hair into the mess. Nope, comb won't work. Ruthie's really done a job this time, she thinks. She reaches under the counter, pulls out the conditioner, pours half the bottle over the doll's head, then tries the comb again. Still no luck. Those tangles are there to stay. Gonna have to cut the gum out anyway. She opens the drawer next to her head, grabs the scissors.

Now she hesitates. Ruthie wouldn't like her doing this, she knows, wouldn't like it at all, but then she thinks, who's the beautician here anyway? and starts to cut. The scissors make little private clicking sounds, like a small dog's nails on lino, or her mother's old wind-up alarm clock. Janie thinks of her mother, snipping and cutting her way through forty-three years of hair, forty-three years of inhaling chemicals and cigarette smoke waved in her face, so many years it almost makes her dizzy to think of it. She frowns again. Cutting the gum out's gonna leave a hole in Suzy's long, frizzy hair, but it can't be helped now, can it? Damn it, Ruthie, damn doll cost a month's worth of tips, you know.

She snips again, watches the gum and synthetic red hair fall to the bathroom floor, and poor Suzy looks like she's going bald in one spot, just like Mama did after the chemo. Can't leave her like that. She looks odd, so just cut a

bit here, snip a bit there. Ruthie'll never notice if I do it just right, she thinks. But the more she snips, the worse Suzy looks, like her head got caught in the blender, and Janie's frowning all the time now. She can't leave her like this. She's a beautician, dammit, she's supposed to know how to make things better; it's her job, and the scissors click and snip and click and snip, and suddenly Janie realizes Suzy's got no hair left, not a one. Her head's as bald as Mama's on the day she died, pink and bald and shiny as a well-used doorknob. She drops the scissors on the floor and stares and stares, and then she's holding Suzy Q tight to her chest, and the tears are just coming. She can't stop them. They come and come and come until she's all dried up. She's got no more left. She gives them all to Ruthie's poor little bald doll, and Suzy Q just soaks them right up, like a pink sponge curler on a customer's head.

When she finally gets herself back together again, she looks at the mess on the floor, at Suzy all wet and smelling of perms and saltwater, at her tired old face in the mirror, at the blue halves of the broken comb in the pink trash can. She puts the doll down and opens the drawer again, reaches back behind the used-up makeup and the worn-down hairbrushes until her fingers find the bag of Ruthie's tangled hair. She scoops up Suzy Q's butchered hair, picks up every single one, and carefully puts them all in the bag, the fake reds and little girl blondes mixing together like fire, or a muddy river running out to sea, or maybe like the colors in the hair dye she used to brew for herself not very long ago, before she went bald, too.

### Interview with **Brendan Quigley**, THEATRE INSTRUCTOR.

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU WORK WITH AMBITIOUS STUDENTS TO NURTURE THEIR TALENTS?

*"I LOOK FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE EAGER TO LEARN — IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE HERE THEN DON'T BE HERE — HANG OUT AT THE MALL. THERE ARE 43,000,000 PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BE ACTORS [SO] DETERMINATION, DRIVE, AND DESIRE ARE NEEDED, BECAUSE THIS IS POSSIBLY THE TOUGHEST BUSINESS IN THE WORLD TO BE IN.*

*SOME STUDENTS WANT TO LEARN STAGE MANAGEMENT, LIGHTING, [STAGE] DESIGN, SOUND DESIGN, OR ANY OF THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS. WE HAVE SOME VERY TALENTED STUDENTS FOR WHOM THAT IS THEIR FOCUS.*

*I GET MORE SATISFACTION PUTTING ON A PRODUCTION HERE THAN PUTTING ON AN ELEVEN-TRUCK TOUR."*





Andrie  
Owings **Family Hair**

There are many different types of hair in my family. My stepdad's hair is slick. He combs it from one side way over to the other side. It's never out of place. My oldest brother and little sister's hair is thick and curly and never minds anybody. Hollis' hair is wavy like noodles and dark brown. Jeff's hair is like sand, and he puts his cap on top of it. My hair is small. I don't have a lot. When I was little I played with the gas heater and got it all burned off. It's growing slowly.

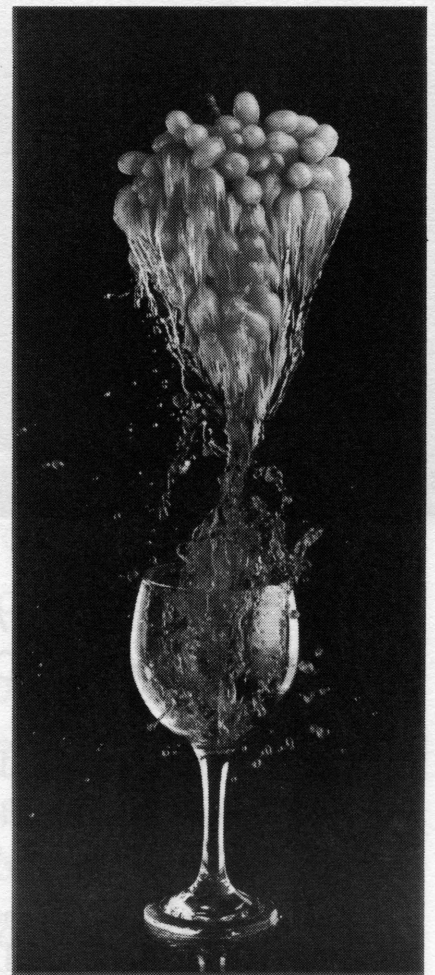
But my mother's hair, my mother's hair is put up in soft spongy curlers each day. I like to put my nose up close to them when she holds me and smell the clean smell. When she takes her curlers out, her hair bounces like big balls all over her head.

Amy Frishkey

## Zest for Life

The zest for life  
Punched the clock,  
Dialed the walls,  
Stuffed the sofas,  
Tore into the pillows,  
Ran for the ice cream man.  
He only took quarters,  
And his name was Sam.  
He's old,  
But he has his tune,  
And I wish we'd play  
Like brothers.

You have a sister of stone  
We too could infect.



Jim Qualia





Quest by Patty Bruce  
photographed by Daniel Didawick



Marie-Claire Montgomery



# Informed Consent

Lynn Monfort

My imagination staggers at the responsibility of medical professionals involved in caring for humanity at its least attractive, most obnoxious, and often final stages of life. Doctors and nurses have refined their bedside manners and become sensitive to patient needs. They strive to inform patients about their conditions and treatment options. In most classifications of illness and diagnosis, doctors know or recognize the problem and the appropriate series of responses. Their responses fix the situation, returning patients neatly to their lives. But not always. In my experience relationships between medical personnel and patients falls between adequate and promising.

Cancer, the silent killer, is one disease that challenges the stellar performance records of doctors and nurses. When the diagnosis is cancer, medical professionals can dramatically fail their patients and their profession. Cancer cures present patients with a more terrifying, more painful, more difficult and almost more destructive reality than the disease itself. Because cancer resists control, doctors and nurses seem to fear cancer, and that fear obstructs their ability to communicate with and educate their patients. A diagnosis so synonymous with death and destruction leaves patients charged with cancer's ugliness. Doctors try to gloss over the ugly side of treatment options and shift focus to the basic of life versus death. However, in my experience, doctors underestimate patients' ability to face the awful truth, so they don't even present it. In the moment of diagnosis even the most capable professionals have lacked the sensitivity, encouragement, optimism, and the courage to tell patients the entire truth. Truth enables heroes; truth can set the patient free to make logical choices, to give informed consent to survival.

Fear crouched in my doctor's announcement. He punctuated his verdict with long, sorrowful facial expressions that undermined my self-confidence. As he elaborated on my condition, I backed into a mental corner, confronted with a blurry picture of terrifying names, somberly pronounced, certain to deliver death. Before I drew another breath, blinked, or thought, the treatment names begin bombarding the tiny hopes that might otherwise have dug in long after the overwhelming announcement.

In speaking of cures my doctor glossed over each potential treatment option, and then, most amazing of all, he asked me to choose my own way out of that corner. Their limited advice? "Some people in your condition do this; some people in your condition do that; some do this and that. What do you want to do?" he asked.

Confronted with appendicitis, doctors won't offer the patient choices; they just fix it, remove it - finished, the end. Doctors set broken bones without the patient's input; they control and cure infections without options or the question, "What do you want to do"?

A professional admission, straight up, in front, that fighting cancer is a crap shoot that may be lost on the roll of the dice might at least allow patients a realistic basis from which to choose their own protocol of treatment. The future impact of significant information, often skipped over because the patient might run like a frightened child, extracts an enormous price in retrospect.

Consider that a mastectomy to treat breast cancer, for instance, not only destroys a woman's chest, but also can maim the arm associated with that breast. In the process of removing lymph nodes, major nerves get severed, destroying sensations to and from the arm. Post-surgical swelling changes the location of the arm in the socket; and often lymph edema, a painful ongoing condition where swelling disrupts the flow of lymph from the arm, invites endless infections. This surgery changes far more than a woman's profile; it is the negligent focus of the well-meaning professional who either doesn't know or doesn't relate the extra details. Why not inform a woman that removal of a breast removes the cancer and changes her

arm forever? She will pay for her continued life with long-term pain.

In treatment of prostate cancer the removal of the gland leaves impotence, urinary problems, and shortens the penis, all potentially devastating effects on the ego as well as the body. While doctors explain some events, they choose technical rather than emotional terms. In the moment of diagnosis and selecting treatment options, the choice of preserving body parts pales in a comparison between life and death. Physicians focus on the parts to be removed and emphasize that a breast or a few inches or other parts here and there are nothing compared to life. Calmly they describe physical treatments they have never experienced. The details they neglect to share are of post-surgical complications and the various horrors of the cancer treatment that create years of physical pain and cast a long shadow of sorrow over permanent physical changes.

At every turn in the process of cancer treatments the dire reality of what will happen is glossed over. "Radiation's easy; you don't even feel it," they say. In one way, that's true. The forty seconds spent alone under an enormous machine radiating your flesh is lonely, not painful. What you're not told is that for months afterward the radiated area blisters and peels over and over again; that a surgical scar in the radiation area may take years to finally heal; and that total physical exhaustion (never mentioned by the professionals) can begin anywhere from a week to a year after the forty-second sessions are over, and can last for another year.

"Chemotherapy may make you sick, but it doesn't last forever," they say. "Your hair may fall out, but it grows back." That sounds simple

*Marie-Claire Montgomery*



enough when the professional explains it to you; but remember, they haven't lived through it. The white-smocked doctor or nurse isn't folded over the latrine waiting for violent spasms to stop. The professional isn't lying awake in the sweat-soaked bed, or freezing in the ninety-degree sunshine. The professional isn't exhausted, losing sleep, hair, weight, or the ability to think rationally and to have patience with endless minutes, hours, or months of pain.

Give the patient a clean statement. "You have cancer. Left alone it will kill you. Treatment, on the other hand, will maim you, shock you, hurt you, make you sick, and deeply challenge your ability to withstand pain. You *may well live, but live or die, you have cancer*, and absolutely nothing will ever be the same again. So, are you willing to give more than you can imagine in body parts and pain in exchange for life? Here's what we'll do for you. It could take years, and even if you eradicate it this time, it will always exist in your mind."

What's wrong with dealing fairly with the patient? With current bedside manner and treatment techniques, cancer patients who demand to know the truth must do their own library research; consult other patients and survivors; call the National Institutes of Cancer for the latest in protocols; and reach out to anyone and everyone else who can shed light on the "options" that box them into the corner. The patient must take the initiative to become informed, not only about the problem, but also about the half dozen possible cures and treatments in their endless combinations. When a patient survives the trauma of treatment and has banished cancer, doctors

remain always vigilant, always fearful, feeding the fear of the cancer patient who, try as he or she might, will never again escape the cloud of doubt. A sore arm might be cancer of the lymph system; a migraine might be a brain tumor; a period of listlessness might mean the cancer is gnawing away somewhere, defying detection. Every bump, lump, and ache gets prodded, poked, sliced, and tested by professionals checking in desperate pursuit of a missed cancer cell. It doesn't end just because the patient eventually feels better. The medical profession lurks, hovering, vigilant and nervous over their work and their patient, haunted by their lack of knowledge about and control over the silent killer, and willing, if necessary, to paint a still blurry picture of treatment options next time.

Rather than approaching cancer patients like foolish children and hiding all the ugly aspects of the potential cure, patients need the whole truth. Patient choices are best made as the result of complete education on disease and treatment options, including the scary parts. Only by informed consent are cancer patients able to choose their fight to win their own wars, battle by battle, month by month, in order to remain alive. Only with a true knowledge of what lies ahead can a patient fairly decide between body parts, pain, time spans, emotions, and life. Pour on the optimism and encouragement and sensitivity, but take up the courage to tell patients the whole truth. Informed consent changes lives forever, for the better.

MOH ABUL  
Shirazi By Marian Moore



Linda Horn





Shiseido by Marian Moore

# Upon Reaching Forty

William A. Graham

There comes in everyone's life a time you can't deny.  
The peak's been passed, you realize with a sigh;  
Your eyes are out of focus; your ears no longer hear;  
The body slowly functions; you're past that fortieth year.

Now, your life will be a long slow decline.  
You've passed that waystation of "holding thirty-nine."  
Rheumatism and arthritis, their coming is so near;  
It's all downhill from now on; you're past that fortieth year.

The teeth may come out; the hair may turn gray.  
The spirit remains young. This we'll always say,  
"Bring on them young women! Give us another beer!  
We'll not be bothered upon passing our fortieth year."

Interview with **Michael Crawford**, DEAN OF FINE ARTS.

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU TEACH FINE ART?

*"MUSIC IS MY BACKGROUND BUT IT ISN'T ANY DIFFERENT THAN ANY OF THE FINE ARTS. WE [PERFORMERS] HAVE A DEEP-SEATED NEED TO SHARE WHAT WE DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE WE PERFORM... WE HAVE A BURNING DESIRE TO PRESENT OUR CRAFT TO THE PEOPLE – WHETHER WE ARE DESIGNERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, ARTISTS, OR ANY PERFORMER. BUT THERE IS NO QUICK WAY; THE [STUDENTS] HAVE TO STICK TO IT. YOU CAN BUY A VERY INEXPENSIVE ELECTRONIC PIANO, BUT YOU STILL HAVE TO TRAIN YOUR MIND AND MUSCLES TO PLAY. OR THERE ARE QUICK-DRAW ART BOOKS, BUT YOU STILL NEED TO KNOW COLOR THEORY. THE MOZARTS OF THE WORLD ARE VERY FEW; THE REST OF US WHO ASPIRE TO BE ARTISTS HAVE TO PLOD ALONG.*

*WE HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT CREATIVE ARTS CAN BE A LIFE-LONG PURSUIT. YOU CAN TAKE PIANO LESSONS AT 59; YOU MAY NOT BECOME A GREAT PIANIST, BUT YOU CAN LEARN ENOUGH TO REALLY ENJOY IT. I FOUND IN MY CAREER [THAT] THE MORE I KNOW ABOUT MUSIC, THE MORE I STUDY, [THE MORE] I REALIZE [HOW LITTLE I KNOW]."*





Paul McDonald





Marie-Claire Montgomery



# Frosty Panes

Wendy Raines

FROSTY PANES AND MINTED GLASS.

I CANNOT GO IN;

I WAS NEVER ASKED.

MY PRESENCE LEAVES THEM ILL AT EASE.

ALTHOUGH I DID NOT CHOOSE IT

I AM THE DISEASE

WITHOUT CURE.

THEIR INDIFFERENCE

TEARS, BURNS, AND SEARS ME

IN A COLD FIRE.

STANDING ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE

I CAN ONLY WATCH THE OTHERS.

WARM AND SECURE.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PANE.

# Editorial

## The Fantasy

"Members of this class who are interested can act as the editorial staff for the next issue of Forces." Wow! Visions of omnipotence - waving my scepter over the favored few and condemning the unlucky to the trash bin. Finally, a chance to be on the other side. Sure, I'll volunteer - there'll be nothing to it.

## The Reality

The slashing and burning is over now, and it wasn't so simple. I held someone's creation in my hands, and I felt unworthy to judge it. But finally, choices were made. Then the easy part was over.

How should the journal look? Did Carolyn get the interview she needed? Should the title of that story be in block type? Did Carolee call about the sculpture we wanted to include? Do we need that much space after the poem on page ten? Did Philip finish the page set up? Did anyone remember to call Peggy about the next meeting? What do you mean our budget won't cover this?

## The Reward

Participating on the editorial staff of Forces has been an exercise in teamwork, discipline, and decision making - and an extraordinary chance for the class members who accepted this challenge to cross the boundary from acquaintance to friendship. We have been privileged to view the work of talented individuals - individuals whose creative forces have driven them to turn their ideas into tangible gifts to all of us. And we have had the opportunity to develop and channel our own creative forces into a journal that we offer to you with the wish that you enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed producing it.

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